



Making Social Care
Better for People

inspection report

Fostering Services

Warrington Borough Council Fostering Service

Bewsey Old School

Lockton Lane

Bewsey

Warrington

Cheshire

WA5 0BF

8th March 2004

Commission for Social Care Inspection

Launched in April 2004, the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) is the single inspectorate for social care in England.

The Commission combines the work formerly done by the Social Services Inspectorate (SSI), the SSI/Audit Commission Joint Review Team and the National Care Standards Commission.

The role of CSCI is to:

- Promote improvement in social care
- Inspect all social care - for adults and children - in the public, private and voluntary sectors
- Publish annual reports to Parliament on the performance of social care and on the state of the social care market
- Inspect and assess 'Value for Money' of council social services
- Hold performance statistics on social care
- Publish the 'star ratings' for council social services
- Register and inspect services against national standards
- Host the Children's Rights Director role.

Inspection Methods & Findings

SECTION B of this report summarises key findings and evidence from this inspection. The following 4-point scale is used to indicate the extent to which standards have been met or not met by placing the assessed level alongside the phrase "Standard met?"

The 4-point scale ranges from:

- 4 - Standard Exceeded (Commendable)
- 3 - Standard Met (No Shortfalls)
- 2 - Standard Almost Met (Minor Shortfalls)
- 1 - Standard Not Met (Major Shortfalls)

'O' or blank in the 'Standard met?' box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion.

'9' in the 'Standard met?' box denotes standard not applicable.

'X' is used where a percentage value or numerical value is not applicable.

FOSTERING SERVICE INFORMATION

Local Authority Fostering Service?

YES

Name of Authority

Warrington Borough Council Fostering Service

Address

Bewsey Old School, Lockton Lane, Bewsey, Warrington,
Cheshire, WA5 0BF

Local Authority Manager

Mrs Fran Smith

Tel No:

01925 444400

Address

Bewsey Old School, Lockton Lane, Bewsey, Warrington,
Cheshire, WA5 0BF

Fax No:

Email Address

Registered Fostering Agency (IFA)

NO

Name of Agency

Tel No

Address

Fax No

Email Address

Registered Number of IFA

Name of Registered Provider

Name of Registered Manager (if applicable)

Date of first registration

Date of latest registration certificate

Registration Conditions Apply ?

Date of last inspection

Date of Inspection Visit		8th March 2004	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		9:00 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Mrs Lesley Moore	149815
Name of Inspector	2		
Name of Inspector	3		
Name of Inspector	4		
Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable) Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the NCSC. They accompany inspectors on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process.			
Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)			
Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection		Fran Smith	

Introduction to Report and Inspection

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Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from last Inspection

Statutory Requirements from this Inspection

Good Practice Recommendations from this Inspection

Part B: Inspection Methods & Findings

(National Minimum Standards For Fostering Services)

- 1. Statement of purpose**
- 2. Fitness to carry on or manage a fostering service**
- 3. Management of the fostering service**
- 4. Securing and promoting welfare**
- 5. Recruiting, checking, managing, supporting and training staff and foster carers**
- 6. Records**
- 7. Fitness of premises**
- 8. Financial requirements**
- 9. Fostering panels**
- 10. Short-term breaks**
- 11. Family and friend carers**

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INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

Independent and local authority fostering services which fall within the jurisdiction of the National Care Standards Commission (NCSC) are subject to inspection, to establish if the service is meeting the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services and the requirements of the Care Standards Act 2000, the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and the Children Act 1989 as amended.

This document summarises the inspection findings of the NCSC in respect of Warrington Borough Council Fostering Service. The inspection findings relate to the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services published by the Secretary of State under sections 23 and 49 of the Care Standards Act 2000, for independent and local authority fostering services respectively.

The Fostering Services Regulations 2002 are secondary legislation, with which a service provider must comply. Service providers are expected to comply fully with the National Minimum Standards. The National Minimum standards will form the basis for judgements by the NCSC in relation to independent fostering agencies regarding registration, the imposition and variation of registration conditions and any enforcement action, and in relation to local authority fostering services regarding notices to the local authority and reports to the Secretary of State under section 47 of the Care Standards Act 2000.

The report follows the format of the National Minimum Standards and the numbering shown in the report corresponds to that of the standards.

The report will show the following:

- Inspection methods used
- Key findings and evidence
- Overall ratings in relation to the standards
- Compliance with the Regulations
- Notifications to the Local Authority and Reports to the Secretary of State
- Required actions on the part of the provider
- Recommended good practice
- Summary of the findings
- Report of the Lay Assessor (where relevant)
- Providers response and proposed action plan to address findings

This report is a public document.

INSPECTION VISITS

Inspections will be undertaken in line with the agreed regulatory framework with additional visits as required. This is in accordance with the provisions of the Care Standards Act 2000. The following inspection methods have been used in the production of this report. The report represents the inspector's findings from the evidence found at the specified inspection dates.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICES PROVIDED.

The fostering and adoption service of Warrington Borough Council Social Services Department was responsible for the recruitment, assessment, training and support and development of all foster and adoptive carers recruited by the service. It provided a service for children in the 'looked after' system within Warrington Borough Council and at the time of the follow up inspection there were 224 foster children placed by the service, of whom 101 were girls and 123 were boys. They ranged in age from babies to older teenagers. The fostering service provided emergency, short term, day care, bridging and long term placements for children and young people, as well as the 'Home from Home' scheme of 18 carers, offering respite care to children with disabilities. The service was lead by a team manager, and a group manager acting as her deputy, a part time administrative assistant, and a panel administrator/training co-ordinator. The team secretary post was vacant at the time of the inspection. There were 8 (+ 1 sessional) supervising social workers within the team covering both fostering and adoption work as well as 2 workers specifically for adoption. The worker responsible for the 'Home from Home' scheme spent the majority of time on this. One of the supervising social workers was also an NVQ assessor of foster carers. The team also had three community support workers who backed up the work of the supervising social workers and provided practical assistance to foster carers.

PART A SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS

Inspector's Summary

(This is an overview of the inspector's findings, which includes good practice, quality issues, areas to be addressed or developed and any other concerns.)

Statement of Purpose. This standard was partially met.

Significant progress had been made in updating the Statement of Purpose and drafting a new Children's guide. Information about complaints was missing from the Statement of Purpose. The innovative style of the Children's guide will be enhanced by further work on explaining policy on bullying, abuse and access to records before it is published.

Fitness to Carry on or Manage a Fostering Service. This standard was met.

The managers responsible for the fostering service were all experienced in social services for children, and worked well together. There was a strong morale within the team who were committed to service quality and improvement.

Management of the Fostering Service. This standard was partially met.

Steady progress was being made on the development of management information systems and performance monitoring, but administrative staff were over loaded, resulting in delays in data loading and therefore accuracy. The team manager was also overloaded, and this prevented her from achieving all that was required in this heavily regulated service.

Securing and Promoting Welfare. This standard was partially met.

Important development was underway with the introduction of BAAF competency based assessment procedures, and good progress had been made on improving focus on the health needs of looked after children. Procedural and direct work by a specialist nurse, and the introduction of Health & Safety audits of all foster homes was good to see, as was the valuable procedure operating to ensure gate keeping of the 'care system'. The inspector was impressed with an example of direct work on independence planning with one young person, the consultation that had taken place with young people re the children's guide. She was also pleased to note the reinstatement of 'end of placement feedback' reporting. Draft policies and procedures on bullying and restraint had been prepared, but the latter required some work on methods of preventing situations becoming out of hand., Senior managers were appropriately concerned about the poor performance on completing Personal Education Plans, and were focusing attention on improving this.

Meeting this standard over-all was however impeded by the following areas. Scant attention that had been paid to issues of overcrowded placements and privacy. A long standing poor practice culture had not been acknowledged, understood or addressed, and included a lack of consultation with placing social workers re emergency placements, expedient but poorly informed matching decisions, with subsequent delays in seeking the required panel authorisations. There were particular pressures on teenage placements, but no focus on providing specialist advice/consultation to existing carers of teenagers with challenging behaviours. Guidance on safe care had not yet been developed, and there was no guidance for carers on their role in preparing teenagers for independence. Tensions about whose role it was to provide transport to contact meetings remained unaddressed and unresolved, and required a joint approach with managers across Children's Services.

Minimal action had been taken in respect of improving the fostering team's awareness of

diversity issues.

Recruiting, Checking, Managing, Supporting and Training Staff and Foster Carers.

This standard was partially met.

The inspector found a rigorous approach to keeping CRB checks up to date. There had been good attention to professional staff capacity since the last inspection, with an establishment increase in posts. New posts were being filled at the time of the inspection to deal with kinship carers. The fostering team was made up of a group of experienced and well motivated staff, who in turn benefited from sound supervision and team development activity. A recruitment strategy for foster carers had been developed and was being implemented. Work had taken place to ensure that foster carer agreements were in place, and foster carers felt well supported over-all. Draft policy and procedures on allegations against carers was under development, and the task of collating information about foster carer's training needs had been allocated.

Conversely, there were insufficient managers and administrative staff in place, and the latter impacted adversely on key functions, including the planned work on establishing a training data base, checks on foster carers, chasing outstanding reviews, and inputting performance management data. A practice note had been sent out to ensure gaps in employment were checked when recruiting staff, but this was not supported by updated corporate HR procedures. Of some concern was the lack of appropriate procedures to guide placement decision making, with the authorising of urgent placements taking place outside the regulatory requirements. In addition, the majority of kinship care placements had not been approved by the fostering panel. No whistle blowing policy had been developed for foster carers, and there had been no active promotion of the complaints procedure. As a result, awareness amongst the foster carers was low, and those visited lacked the necessary confidence to challenge practice on behalf of the children they cared for and themselves. The assistant director's stated intention to improve the status of carers, must involve attention to this area, as well as a pro-active approach to ensuring that carers involved in training others, undertake training on the new competency based assessment process. A training strategy for foster carers, addressing needs analysis, access and child care arrangements, will also be required to ensure practice improvements continue to develop.

Records. This standard was partially met.

Good progress had been made in terms of improving understanding about confidentiality, supported by practical arrangements for foster carers storing records. New file structures for carer's records were being introduced, but the quality of file contents varied in amongst the files inspected. Records of fostering panel discussions and recommendations had been strengthened. Intentions to make clear carer's and children's entitlements to accessing their records were not before time.

File records were not all up to date, and in one case did not include important child protection information. In another file there was muddle about the carer's terms of approval, which was subsequently duplicated in panel discussions about the family.

Fitness of Premises. Not inspected

Financial Requirements This standard was partially met.

A new payment scheme had recently been agreed for kinship carers, which would be introduced incrementally over the coming year by means of the children's review meetings. The inspector met one family who were in urgent need of increased financial support.

Fostering panels. This standard was not met

Whilst the fostering panel meeting observed during this inspection undertook the required functions, received some pertinent, child focused and important challenges, especially from its independent members, and was minuted effectively; the majority of processes required improvement and development.

There were no terms of reference or comprehensive procedures for the panel, and as a consequence, the agenda was constructed in an adhoc and unplanned fashion, without due attention to compilation of full documentation, outstanding carer reviews, regulation time scales for approvals, and timescales for authorisations of emergency matching decisions involving changes of carer's terms of approval. Consequently the panel were called upon to make a number of recommendations where the facts presented gave them limited scope for anything other than the ratification of a 'fait a compli'. Regrettably the panel appeared to have grown used to this situation. This was not helped by the position of the panel chair, who also acted as the authoriser of placement decisions which subsequently required challenge by the panel he chaired. The panel was also over due for a review of its membership.

Short Term Breaks. Not inspected.

Family and Friends as Carers. This standard was not met

Whilst new policy and procedures had been developed and were available from July 2003, they required strengthening in terms of time scales, and implementation. 44 kinship carers required comprehensive assessment and approval by the fostering panel; only 4 of these were allocated for the work to be done at the time of the inspection. The inspector met two families providing good standards of care in challenging situations, but both carers required additional support to that which they were receiving.

Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

(Local Authority Fostering Services Only)

The following statutory Reports or Notifications are to be made under the Care Standards Act as a result of the findings of this inspection:

Report to the Secretary of State under section 47(3) of the Care Standards Act 2000 that the Commission considers the Local Authority's fostering service satisfies the regulatory requirements:

NO

Notice to the Local Authority under section 47(5) of the Care Standards Act 2000 of failure(s) to satisfy regulatory requirements in their fostering service which are not substantial, and specifying the action the Commission considers the Authority should take to remedy the failure(s), informing the Secretary of State of that Notice:

YES

Report to the Secretary of State under section 47(4)(a) of the Care Standards Act of a failure by a Local Authority fostering service to satisfy regulatory requirements which is not considered substantial:

NO

Report to the Secretary of State under section 47(1) of the Care Standards Act 2000 of substantial failure to satisfy regulatory requirements by a Local Authority fostering service:

NO

The grounds for the above Report or Notice are:

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

NO

If No please list below

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS				
Identified below are areas not addressed from the last inspection report which indicates a non-compliance with the Care Standards Act 2000 and Fostering Services Regulations 2002.				
No.	Regulation	Standard	Required actions	
1	29	FS30	The manager must ensure the first review of foster carers is <i>carried out</i> and is considered by the fostering panel and a recommendation is made by them whether or not the person remains suitable to act as a foster carer or not his terms of approval remain appropriate.	
2	38	FS30	The manager must ensure that any placement made in an emergency with a person who is not a foster carer does not exceed 6 weeks.	
3	34	FS30	The manager must only place a child with a foster carer if the terms of his approval are consistent with the placement.	
4	38	FS32	The manager must not place a child with a person who is a relative or friend of a foster child for a period exceeding 6 weeks.	

Action is being taken by the National Care Standards Commission to monitor compliance with the above requirements.

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS IDENTIFIED DURING THIS INSPECTION

Action Plan: The appropriate Officer of the Local Authority or the Registered Person (as applicable) is requested to provide the Commission with an Action Plan, which indicates how requirements and recommendations are to be addressed. This action plan will be made available on request to the Area Office.

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

Identified below are areas addressed in the main body of the report which indicate non-compliance with the Care Standards Act 2000, the Children Act 1989, the Fostering Services Regulations 2002, or the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services. The Authority or Registered Person(s) is/are required to comply within the given time scales in order to comply with the Regulatory Requirements for fostering services.

No.	Regulation	Standard *	Requirement	
1	29	FS30	The manager must ensure the first review of foster carers is <i>carried out</i> and is considered by the fostering panel and a recommendation is made by them whether or not the person remains suitable to act as a foster carer or not his terms of approval remain appropriate.	March 2004
2	38	FS30	The manager must ensure that any placement made in an emergency with a person who is not a foster carer does not exceed 6 weeks.	March 2004
3	34	FS30	The manager must only place a child with a foster carer if the terms of his approval are consistent with the placement.	March 2004
4	38	FS32	The manager must not place a child with a person who is a relative or friend of a foster child for a period exceeding 6 weeks.	March 2004
5	29	FS4	An annual review must take place of each foster carer.	March 2004
6	34	FS8	The manager must ensure that all matching procedures are consistent with the regulations, and that all matching activity includes consultation with all relevant professionals, the child in placement and their families.	March 2004

7	19	FS16	The manager must ensure that there is an adequate and appropriate level and experience of administrative and clerical support.	March 2004
8	28	FS16	Any changes to the terms of approval of foster carers must be referred to panel for a recommendation re approval and subsequent authorisation by the agency decision maker.	March 2004
9	12 & 22	FS25	The manager must ensure that an easily accessible incident log is maintained and monitored, on the files of carers, which clearly records any accidents, incidents or child protection concerns about children/young people placed within the home.	March 2004
10	26	FS30	The Fostering panel must consider any applications to change the terms of a foster carer's approval, and make recommendations to the agency decision maker about whether the change is appropriate.	March 2004
11	24	FS30	The chair of the fostering panel must be independent of the agency's processes of day to day decision on fostering assessments and placements.	July 2004
12	28	FS32	The approval of kinship carers must be made by the agency decision maker following an assessment which has been considered by the fostering panel.	March 2004

GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THIS INSPECTION

Identified below are areas addressed in the main body of the report which relate to the National Minimum Standards and are seen as good practice issues which should be considered for implementation by the Authority or Registered Person(s).

No.	Refer to Standard *	Recommendation Action
1	FS6	The manager should ensure steps are taken to consider the situation of two young people where access to their bedrooms compromises their privacy.
2	FS6	The manager should ensure that the fostering service considers the means by which foster carers transport children in safety and appropriate to their need.

3	FS7	The manager should give consideration to discussion of the issues around diversity with the input of a specialist worker to ensure a broader knowledge base and consistency of approval within the service.
4	FS8	The manager should ensure the work of the fostering service is directed to enhance the understanding and skills of existing foster carers looking after disaffected teenagers.
5	FS9	The manager should ensure the fostering service provides safe caring guidelines based on a written policy for each home.
6	FS12	The manager should ensure carers who are relatives of a foster child are provided with appropriate consent to medical treatment.
7	FS18	The manager should ensure the fostering service introduces a whistle blowing policy for foster carers.
8	FS25	The manager should ensure that children and foster carers are encouraged to access records held on them and make additions and comments to the records and to record any personal statements, including any dissent.
9	FS30	The manager should ensure that one of the independent members of the fostering panel is normally a person who has at any time been placed with foster carers or whose child has at any time been placed with them.
10	FS1	The statement of purpose should include information about the number and outcomes of complaints. Description of the new competency based assessments should also be added.
11	FS1	The Children's guide should contain details about any <i>local</i> advocacy services and guidance on how to access records.
12	FS4	The manager should develop a robust system which ensures improved time scale compliance for the completion of foster carer reviews.
13	FS5	Managers should consider increasing the line management capacity for the fostering service, ensuring an adequate level of dedicated management time exclusively to the fostering service.
14	FS6	The manager should ensure that children who are looked after, and foster families, are not overcrowded.
15	FS6	Managers should ensure that all carers are provided with the equipment required to care for children.
16	FS8	Consideration of the development needs of carers in respect of managing the emotional needs of disaffected teenagers and their carers, should be done in collaboration with specialists from health and therapeutic services.

17	FS10	In addressing solutions to the issue of transporting children to contact, a joint and collaborative approach between the fostering team, placing social workers and policy makers should be adopted.
18	FS13	As part of the drive in children's services to improve performance, the fostering service should give greater priority to ensuring that foster carers both chase and contribute to the preparation and action on Personal Education Plans.
19	FS14	In updating the foster carer's handbook, managers should ensure additional guidance on the role of carers in preparing young people for independence.
20	FS15	Managers should ensure that the procedure for ensuring gaps in employment are interrogated and recorded is incorporated into written policy and procedures.
21	FS22	Managers should promote the feedback and complaints procedure to all foster carers, including kinship carers, encouraging and empowering them to feel more confident about using the procedures in the best interests of the children they care for.
22	FS23	Carers contributing to training for prospective carers should be more strongly encouraged to undertake training in new competency based assessment processes.
23	FS23	A comprehensive process for systematically identifying training needs, both through annual reviews, and responding to local need and national requirements, should be developed. The process should include: a range of methods for developing the skills of carers less interested in formal training courses; ensure adequate child care provision to free carers up to attend training; and involve an evaluation process to assess quality.
24	FS25	In updating the foster carer's handbook, the manager should ensure a stronger emphasis on the confidentiality of information about children and details about foster carer's access to their records.
25	FS29	The new payment scheme for kinship carers should be considered as part of the urgent assessments and approvals process, and introduced as a matter of priority.
28	FS32	Managers should develop fostering panel terms of reference and more detailed fostering panel procedures, which provide guidance about roles and responsibilities for administrative staff, panel chair and members, supervising and placing social workers and foster carers.
26	FS30	In promoting the fostering task, managers should pay particular attention to the valuable contribution made by kinship carers. This should be formalised in practice through improved and timely assessment, approval and support processes.

28	FS32	Policy and procedures re kinship carers should be strengthened in respect of approval processes and timescales. Procedures should ensure that assessments of any arrangements expected to exceed 6 weeks begin immediately; authorisation of carer assessments (See Schedule 1) by the chair of the panel within 6 weeks, followed by his decision being reported to panel for their endorsement for a period not exceeding 18 weeks; and completed by a comprehensive assessment being presented to panel for their approval and recommendation within 24 weeks of the beginning of placement.
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* Note: You may refer to the relevant standard in the remainder of the report by omitting the 2-letter prefix e.g. FS10 refers to Standard 10.

PART B**INSPECTION METHODS & FINDINGS**

The following inspection methods have been used in the production of this report

Number of Inspector days spent	12
Survey of placing authorities	NO
Foster carer survey	NO
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	
• Directors of Social services	NA
• Child protection officer	YES
• Specialist advisor (s)	NO
• Local Foster Care Association	NO
Tracking Individual welfare arrangements	NA
• Interview with children	YES
• Interview with foster carers	YES
• Interview with agency staff	YES
• Contact with parents	NO
• Contact with supervising social workers	YES
• Examination of files	YES
Individual interview with manager	YES
Information from provider	YES
Individual interviews with key staff	YES
Group discussion with staff	YES
Interview with panel chair	YES
Observation of foster carer training	NO
Observation of foster panel	YES
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Interview with individual child	YES
Date of Inspection	8/3/04
Time of Inspection	9.00AM
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	70

The following pages summarise the key findings and evidence from this inspection, together with the NCSC assessment of the extent to which the National Minimum Standards have been met. The following scale is used to indicate the extent to which standards have been met or not met by placing the assessed level alongside the phrase "Standard met?"

The scale ranges from:

- | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------|
| 4 - Standard Exceeded | (Commendable) |
| 3 - Standard Met | (No Shortfalls) |
| 2 - Standard Almost Met | (Minor Shortfalls) |
| 1 - Standard Not Met | (Major Shortfalls) |

"0" in the "Standard met?" box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion.

"9" in the "Standard met?" box denotes standard not applicable.

"X" is used where a percentage value or numerical value is not applicable.

Statement of Purpose

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

- There is clear statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service and the fostering service ensures that they meet those aims and objectives.

Standard 1 (1.1 - 1.6)

There is a clear statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service and of what facilities and services they provide.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

A comprehensive statement of Purpose had been published in September 2003. It provided a good description of the service at that time, and when updated will need to describe the new competency based assessment process that was being introduced at the time of this inspection.

Although complaints procedures were described, information about the number of complaints received and their outcomes was not published in the statement of purpose. This should be collated and added when the document is updated.

Good progress had been made in the drafting of a Children's Guide, in collaboration with young people themselves. The guide was to be 'inter-active' with spaces for the child/young person to add information relevant to themselves. This is commended. The final version will benefit from a contents page, clearer distinctions between bullying/abuse, information about how to contact *local* independent advocacy, and a section on access to records.
[See recommendation nos. 10 & 11.]

Fitness to Carry On or Manage a Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- The fostering service is provided and managed by those with the appropriate skills and experience to do so efficiently and effectively and by those who are suitable to work with children.

Standard 2 (2.1 - 2.4)

The people involved in carrying on and managing the fostering service possess the necessary business and management skills and financial expertise to manage the work efficiently and effectively and have the necessary knowledge and experience of childcare and fostering to do so in a professional manner.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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The team manager of the fostering service possessed the required skills and expertise for the job, as did her deputy 'group manager', who was reported to have run the team well during the team manager's absence. The principal officer and new line manager of the service was new to family placements services, but was an experienced and strong manager, aware of the areas of specialist learning required.

Standard 3 (3.1 - 3.4)

Any persons carrying on or managing the fostering service are suitable people to run a business concerned with safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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Inspection of staffing records found criminal records checks had been applied for by the borough council H & R section and it was stated that these checks would be updated every three years. Records were kept in an appropriate manner.

Management of the Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- The fostering service is managed ethically and efficiently, delivering a good quality foster care service and avoiding confusion and conflicts of role.

Standard 4 (4.1 – 4.5)

There are clear procedures for monitoring and controlling the activities of the fostering service and ensuring quality performance.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

Warrington's performance management information systems were developing well, and were already driving up performance in respect of child protection processes and LAC reviews, which had improved considerably in the past year. Performance had not been so effectively improved in respect of foster carer reviews however, with only 50 % being undertaken within the required timescales. Accuracy of the information was reliant on staff's capacity to load data onto the system, and the absence of a team secretary, with patchy cover arrangements, for some months may have impacted on this.

Planned moves towards stronger compliance reporting in respect of all the requirements which contribute to safeguarding of LACs, may help to ensure future improvements. In addition, the 'care pay' system was due to be upgraded in the coming months, and this would enable regular reports to be produced on the numbers of kinship carers requiring approval and review for managers.

[See requirement no. 5 & recommendation no. 12]

Number of statutory notifications made to NCSC in last 12 months:

X

Death of a child placed with foster parents.

X

Referral to Secretary of State of a person working for the service as unsuitable to work with children.

X

Serious illness or accident of a child.

X

Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.

X

Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution.

X

Serious incident relating to a foster child involving calling the police to a foster home.

X

Serious complaint about a foster parent.

X

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

X

Number of complaints made to NCSC about the agency in the past 12 months:

X

Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:

X

Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.4)**The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.****Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****2**

There were pressures on the team manager arising from the wide span of her responsibilities, which included adoption; and the transfer of kinship carers; as well as the growing number of people in the team. It had become increasingly difficult to undertake all the required tasks in each heavily regulated area of the service. This was affecting the quality of the work in some cases. Line managers acknowledged that the position required urgent review.

[See recommendation no. 13]

Securing and Promoting Welfare

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- The fostering service promotes and safeguards the child/young person's physical, mental and emotional welfare.

Standard 6 (6.1 - 6.9)

The fostering service makes available foster carers who provide a safe, healthy and nurturing environment.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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The inspector met with four foster families and considered them all to be providing an excellent standard and quality of care.

New BAAF competency based training and assessments for new carers would ensure an improved focus on health and safety.

The development of guidance on health issues and a medications policy was underway for children with disabilities, with specialist input from a dedicated nurse professional for looked after children. Consultation was still taking place to gain the agreements of all involved.

Health & Safety audits had been introduced by the fostering team and were being implemented with all carers. The inspector saw evidence of safety equipment in the home of one family caring for young children; although a car seat had not been provided. As a result, it was virtually impossible for the family to take the children out.

There were ongoing issues about privacy and overcrowding, both in a case inspected, but also in others reported by staff. The panel also raised this as a concern. Carers were often asked to look after children/young people over and above their terms of approval, with insufficient oversight or consideration of the impact on the carers' own children or looked after children already in placement. Social workers reported that they were rarely consulted about emergency placements, and had examples of placements disrupting as a result. (See also standard 8).

Whilst the Social Services had paid for a house to be extended for one foster family, this had not solved their overcrowding problems to an adequate standard.

[See recommendation nos. 1, 14 & 15.]

Standard 7 (7.1 - 7.7)

The fostering service ensures that children and young people, and their families, are provided with foster care services which value diversity and promote equality.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

2

Staff reported the numbers of children/young people from black or minority ethnic backgrounds to be extremely low, at or around 5%. A specialist worker had been appointed but the team were unclear about their role and they had not been invited to discuss diversity issues in foster care. A booklet on 'Breaking Down Barriers' was available to staff, and contained relevant information in broad terms and carers had been sent on relevant training. There was still room for development of the team's focus and understanding in this area.

[See recommendation no.3]

Standard 8 (8.1 - 8.7)

Local authority fostering services, and voluntary agencies placing children in their own right, ensure that each child or young person placed in foster care is carefully matched with a carer capable of meeting her/his assessed needs. For agencies providing foster carers to local authorities, those agencies ensure that they offer carers only if they represent appropriate matches for a child for whom a local authority is seeking a carer.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

1

The social work teams ensured that 'gate keeping' meetings took place when children/young people were on the verge of becoming looked after, affording time to focus on planning and decision making in a considered way.

There were however considerable pressures on available placements for teenagers in particular, and the inspector came across a number of examples of cases where there had not been a thorough matching process prior to placement. Placements (not only in emergencies) were commonly made with carers taking them outside of their terms of approval, i.e. over the numbers they were approved for. Social workers of children already in placements complained that they were not routinely consulted about matching decisions of new children being placed. Furthermore, whilst decisions were authorised by a senior manager, it was not uncommon for the decision not to be taken to panel for review/agreement to a change in the terms of approval, for a considerable period of time. In one case tracked the inspector could find no clear reason for an 8 month delay, other than 'custom and practice'. In this case the needs of each child placed had not been thoroughly considered. (See also standard 30).

The recommendation from 2003 to enhancing the skills of carers looking after disaffected teenagers had not yet been progressed, and it was reported that some experienced carers were ambivalent about attending training. One carer interviewed by the inspector was dealing with some extremely demanding behaviour, and may have benefited from some specialist advice and support. There were opportunities available through the work of the specialist health nurse on 'Anger Management', and increased capacity within the 'Therapeutic team', to now consider new ways of supporting teenage carers. (See also standard 32).

[See requirement no.6 & recommendation nos.4 & 16]

Standard 9 (9.1 - 9.8) The fostering service protects each child or young person from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and deprivation.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	2
<p>Progress had been made on the preparation of written guidelines on 'Anti-bullying' and the use of 'Restraint' by foster carers, which were available in draft form. The draft on 'anti-bullying' would benefit from additional and specific guidance on how to help victims; and specialists in therapeutic work may be able to provide contributions. The draft on 'using restraint' needed more detail on measures for preventing situations from escalating, including techniques for diverting young people, providing/creating 'time out' and space to cool down etc. Procedures for residential care may be useful reference points.</p> <p>Written guidance on safe care had not yet been started, and it was envisaged that this would be prepared in readiness for the review of the foster carer's handbook due in the spring. [See recommendation no.5]</p>		
Percentage of foster children placed who report never or hardly ever being bullied:	X	%

Standard 10 (10.1 - 10.9) The fostering service makes sure that each child or young person in foster care is encouraged to maintain and develop family contacts and friendships as set out in her/his care plan and/or foster placement agreement.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	2
<p>Foster carers interviewed by the inspector understood and were sensitive to the importance of contact arrangements.</p> <p>Placing social workers were unhappy about a number of carers who would not agree to provide transport for children/young people to contact meetings, reporting that this sometimes lead to children having to return from difficult meetings with limited personal support during the journey. In addition, the refusal of some carers impacted on the 'community support workers' in social work teams who undertook the transport, taking them away from 'family support' and preventative work. Supervising social workers shared the frustration about the reluctance of some carers to provide transport, despite a requirement to undertake this. There was a danger that this apparent 'them & us issue' could adversely effect relationships between placing and supervising social work teams, unless a joint approach could be adopted to problem solving and developing jointly agreed policy and procedures. [See recommendation nos.2 & 17.]</p>		

Standard 11 (11.1 - 11.5)
The fostering service ensures that children's opinions, and those of their families and others significant to the child, are sought over all issues that are likely to affect their daily life and their future.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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The system of end of placement feedback reporting had been re-instated. Management information indicated that the views of children over 5 years were ascertained in 73% of LAC reviews during the autumn period of 2003.

A Children's Focus Group had been directly involved in the development of the Children's Guide and their influence was evident in the vibrant and clear way the draft was presented.

Standard 12 (12.1 - 12.8)
The fostering service ensures that it provides foster care services which help each child or young person in foster care to receive health care which meets her/his needs for physical, emotional and social development, together with information and training appropriate to her/his age and understanding to enable informed participation in decisions about her/his health needs.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	2
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Good progress had been made to ensure that carers kept a running record of health issues for the children/young people they looked after. They had been provided with a checklist form on which to record any appointments.

Performance information indicated improvement in the attendance to the health needs of looked after children. The specialist nurse arranged all medicals and undertook checks herself for young people who were reluctant to undergo a full medical.

There was some uncertainty amongst three of the carers interviewed about consents to medical treatment. They were unaware about whether birth parents had signed any consents, and stated that they would contact the placing social worker should the need arise. This may pose unnecessary challenges should the need for emergency treatment arise.

[See recommendation no.6]

Standard 13 (13.1 - 13.8)
The fostering service gives a high priority to meeting the educational needs of each child or young person in foster care and ensures that she/he is encouraged to attain her/his full potential.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	2
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Senior managers were extremely concerned about the relatively poor performance on the completion of Personal Education Plans; i.e. 147 PEPs outstanding at the end of February 2004. Renewed attention was being paid to the education of looked after children, with immediate planning to improve performance in this area.

Senior managers anticipated that a departmental re-organisation, bringing social services and education together into a single Children's Services department within the council, would further enhance joint working arrangements in the medium term.

[See recommendation no.18.]

Standard 14 (14.1 - 14.5)

The fostering service ensures that their foster care services help to develop skills, competence and knowledge necessary for adult living.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

The inspector tracked one case where the Leaving Care team had recently assumed placing responsibility. Work had begun work on a pathway plan in a sensitive way and at a pace suited to the young person's needs. This work had contributed to the stability of the placement, and the safety of the young person.

It was less clear what the general requirements of foster carers and supervising social workers was in terms of preparing young people for adulthood. The review of the foster carers handbook in the spring will afford an opportunity to develop some written guidance in collaboration with the leaving care team.

[See recommendation no.19]

Recruiting, Checking, Managing, Supporting and Training Staff and Foster Carers

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- The people who work in or for the fostering service are suitable to work with children and young people and they are managed, trained and supported in such a way as to ensure the best possible outcomes for children in foster care. The number of staff and carers and their range of qualifications and experience are sufficient to achieve the purposes and functions of the organisation.

Standard 15 (15.1 - 15.8)

Any people working in or for the fostering service are suitable people to work with children and young people and to safeguard and promote their welfare.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

Following the 2003 inspection, managers had been reminded to ensure that any gaps in employment evidenced on CVs were checked. The issue of employment gaps had not arisen in appointments made in the last year, but the inspector did not find evidence of management qualification checks recorded on personnel files. Amendments had not yet been made to the staff recruitment procedures which were corporate. This will need to be addressed.

A rigorous approach to updating checks on staff was in evidence.

The fostering team had all received training in Competency based assessments during the autumn of 2003.

[See recommendation no.20]

Total number of staff of the agency:

21

Number of staff who have left the agency in the past 12 months:

1

Standard 16 (16.1 - 16.16)

Staff are organised and managed in a way that delivers an efficient and effective foster care service.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

1

There had been some increases in social work posts and the introduction of a group leader role within the team since the last inspection. All staff were of an appropriate level of experience and professional supervision and support arrangements appeared to be sound.

The systems in place to approve carers were not sufficiently robust, with too many decisions being made outside of the panel. Carers, particularly of teenagers were commonly used outside of their terms of approval, and authorisation was provided for long periods by senior managers, rather than by the fostering panel. The majority of kinship carers had not been approved at all, and the intention was to seek their retrospective approval by the 'agency decision maker', and only begin taking new carers to panel in the future.

This custom and practice had developed over a long period, and there was insufficient

understanding about the need for timely and comprehensive evaluation of recommendations to approve carers in the way afforded by a fostering panel; rather than the 'expedient' decision making operational managers inevitably felt compelled to make. (See also standards 8, 30 & 32).

The systems to ensure that carers were reviewed within regulatory timescales were also not succeeding in achieving the required outcomes.

A number of staff reported that there were insufficient administrative posts, irrespective of sickness and cover problems, and insufficient flexibility within job descriptions to enable work to be shared. This meant that when admin staff were out of the office for a period of leave/sickness, the majority of work piled up and waited for their return. Some of this work related to statutory checks, the chasing of statutory requirements i.e. reviews, and the inputting of data for the purpose of accurate performance monitoring. When reviewing team functioning and resourcing, admin support must be made a greater priority.

[See Requirement nos.7 & 8.]

Standard 17 (17.1 - 17.7)

The fostering service has an adequate number of sufficiently experienced and qualified staff and recruits a range of carers to meet the needs of children and young people for whom it aims to provide a service.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The fostering team appeared to be adequately resourced with professional staff. Recruitment was in process to fill new posts designated to deal with kinship care. Good staff morale was in evidence and the number of experienced staff who had opted to stay working within the authority, thus retaining skills and experience, was high.

A Recruitment Strategy for foster carers was in operation, and had been developed by a designated worker for recruitment and service development. This aimed to recruit 32 additional carers, 4 of which were to be for teenagers. 40 prospective carers were being assessed by the team in February 2004, and staff were aware of the shortfalls in teenage carers.

The new BAAF competency based assessment process was in the early stages of being introduced, with prospective carers being trained.

Standard 18 (18.1 - 18.7)

The fostering service is a fair and competent employer, with sound employment practices and good support for its staff and carers.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

A recording system had been introduced to ensure the completion of foster carer agreements. The inspector found signed agreements on 3 out of the 4 Foster carer files inspected.

Work had not yet begun on the development of a whistle blowing policy for foster carers, although there had been discussion about the use of the staff policy, no decision had yet been reached.

In view of the known sensitivities around whistle blowing, particularly for carers who may feel

less confident, it is important that greater priority be afforded to this recommendation in the coming year.
[See recommendation no.7]

Standard 19 (19.1 - 19.7)

There is a good quality training programme to enhance individual skills and to keep staff up-to-date with professional and legal developments.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

0

Not inspected.

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)

All staff are properly accountable and supported.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The fostering team reported that they met regularly with their line managers, and as a team, and that regular half day meetings were held when guest speakers were invited, feedback from courses was given and cases discussions took place. Morale was high within the team.

Standard 21 (21.1 - 21.6)**The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers.****Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****3**

Those carers interviewed by the inspector felt well supported by their supervising social workers, although some reported that the frequency of visiting/telephone contact varied between workers.

Standard 22 (22.1 - 22.10)**The fostering service is a managed one that provides supervision for foster carers and helps them to develop their skills.****Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****2**

Following the last inspection, a policy and procedure re allegations of abuse by carers was available in draft form and was due to be consulted on. The draft covers the area of support available to carers.

Information about complaints and representations was available in the foster carer's handbook, but not all carers or social workers were aware of it. The inspector met three carers who lacked sufficient confidence to pursue complaints, feeling fearful that this may reflect poorly on them, rather than understanding the need to pursue service improvement on behalf of children/young people. The head of service was keen to increase the status of foster carers, and may find that active encouragement of feedback and advocacy on behalf of children/young people, may contribute towards achieving this.

[See recommendation no.21]

Standard 23 (23.1 - 23.9)**The fostering service ensures that foster carers are trained in the skills required to provide high quality care and meet the needs of each child/young person placed in their care.****Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****2**

Following the last inspection, new competency based assessments were being introduced, and whilst all the social workers had completed the training on this, carers had yet to complete this. The manager reported that carers involved in training prospective carers were 'encouraged' to attend. This approach may need to be strengthened.

The new panel administrator had been additionally tasked with the role of 'training co-ordinator'. He planned to establish a data base with all the courses undertaken by carers, and to take an active role in setting up courses as training needs arose, e.g. through annual reviews. It was envisaged that this would establish a more coherent approach to meeting the training needs of carers in the future. Staff reported that some of the more experienced carers were reluctant to participate in training, whilst foster carers told the inspector that child care commitments prevented them from attending courses.

It will be important as this service develops for staff to ensure a robust system for identifying

and meeting training needs, (including the introduction of new policies and procedures, methods for developing 'reluctant' carers) and evaluation of training effectiveness.
[See recommendation nos. 22 & 23.]

Records

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- All appropriate records are kept and are accessible in relation to the fostering services and the individual foster carers and foster children.

Standard 24 (24.1 - 24.8)

The fostering service ensures that an up-to-date, comprehensive case record is maintained for each child or young person in foster care, which details the nature, and quality of care provided and contributes to an understanding of her/his life events. Relevant information from the case records is made available to the child and to anyone involved in her/his care.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

Foster carers interviewed had been given a lockable box to store children's records.

Standard 25 (25.1 - 25.13)

The fostering service's administrative records contain all significant information relevant to the running of the foster care service and as required by regulations.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

Foster carer's files had been restructured, and included a separate log for children's placements. This made the records easy to access by managers auditing files. Managers stated that they gave close attention to monitoring any complaints/allegations and received minutes of 'Abuse by Carers' meetings. There was evidence of carers being deregistered following appropriate handling of allegations. Records on one carer's file were not up to date, and this was of particular concern because there had been child protection concerns relating to the young person placed. Subsequent checking revealed that professionals meetings had taken place without the supervising social worker's knowledge.

On reading foster carer files, the inspector found copies of assessments on all four files, but a record of panel discussions and recommendations on only two files. On one of these, the terms of approval were muddled through-out subsequent documents, including subsequent panel papers, and not congruent with the original panel decision. A new procedure for ensuring that panel discussions and recommendations were fully recorded had been implemented since the last inspection, but records of some earlier panels were not available on files.

The foster carers interviewed had received a clear message from the fostering team, that

information about the children they looked after was confidential; although some acknowledged that the network of carers within the area was very close. Confidentiality issues were also covered in the training of prospective carers. Not all the carers interviewed were aware of the entitlements of children and themselves re accessing their records. Managers acknowledged that more detailed guidance on confidentiality and access to records was required in the foster carer's handbook due to be updated in the spring. [See requirement no. 9 + recommendation nos.8 & 24.]

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:		224
Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:		57
Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:		147
Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:		X
Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:		X
Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £	X	Maximum £ X

Fitness of Premises for use as Fostering Service

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

- The premises used as offices by the fostering service are suitable for the purpose.

Standard 26 (26.1 - 26.5)

Premises used as offices by the fostering service are appropriate for the purpose.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

Not inspected, but appeared to be adequate.

Financial Requirements

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- The agency fostering services are financially viable and appropriate and timely payments are made to foster carers.

Standard 27 (27.1 - 27.3)

The agency ensures it is financially viable at all times and has sufficient financial resources to fulfil its obligations.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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	0
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Not inspected.

Standard 28 (28.1 - 28.7)

The financial processes/systems of the agency are properly operated and maintained in accordance with sound and appropriate accounting standards and practice.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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	0
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Not inspected.

Standard 29 (29.1 - 29.2)

Each foster carer receives an allowance and agreed expenses, which cover the full cost of caring for each child or young person placed with him or her. Payments are made promptly and at the agreed time. Allowances and fees are reviewed annually.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

2

Not inspected in detail, although the inspector did meet kinship carers who were in the process of being assessed. The carers were receiving a small allowance which did not cover their expenses. They were struggling to pay for petrol and other essential items for the children, but felt unconfident about pressing social worker's for more money in case this prejudiced them against their family as longer term carers. Managers reported that a new payment scheme for kinship carers had been agreed, and that allowances would be on a par with those of other foster carers. The new allowances were to be introduced incrementally as cases were reviewed. Managers agreed to bring forward this review for the carers referred to above.

[See recommendation no.25.]

Fostering Panels

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- **Fostering panels are organised efficiently and effectively so as to ensure that good quality decisions are made about the approval of foster carers, in line with the overriding objective to promote and safeguard the welfare of children in foster care.**

Standard 30 (30.1 - 30.9)

Fostering panels have clear written policies and procedures, which are implemented in practice, about the handling of their functions.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

1

Presentation of the 1st foster carer reviews at the fostering panel had begun over the past year, but there was no system for chasing these onto the agenda. Many were late (See also Standard 4) and the panel chair was not confident that they were coming through in the required volume.

The duration of placements made in an emergency continued to exceed 6 weeks, some by considerable periods of time. The practice of exceeding regulation time scales was a well established, long standing custom, accepted by managers at all levels. Emergency placements with approved carers outside their terms of reference as well as those with unapproved kinship carers routinely exceeded 6 weeks and too many matches were authorised by managers without reference to the panel, for unnecessarily long periods. New policy and procedural guidance was available on kinship care. These were vague about time scales and needed strengthening. Managers also acknowledged that they were not yet fully implemented, and social workers interviewed did not appear to be aware of them. There were plans to approve 44 existing kinship carers *outside* of the panel via the agency decision maker, and to arrange training the panel to enable them to approve all 'new' approvals. (See also standard 32).

A worrying number of placements, not only emergencies, were being authorised by senior managers, which took carers outside of their terms of approval. These were presented to panel at a later (sometimes much later as described above) point. Three such cases were presented to the panel observed during this inspection. Inevitably this became a 'ratification' process of a 'fait a complis'. In one of the cases tracked, the panel raised appropriate concerns about what they were being asked to agree, and disagreed where they could. However, the panel, like staff and managers, members appeared to have grown too 'used to' these situations, in which their authority was compromised.

The fostering panel had been making a detailed record of its discussions and recommendations since the last inspection and evidence of this change was observed on files and in the minutes. However, there were no terms of reference for the panel and only brief procedures describing the administrative processes involved in managing the paperwork. Panel administrators depended on placing social workers to contribute items to the agenda, without a pro-active approach to setting the agenda in collaboration with the panel chair. Form F's were not available to panel in two cases where approval was being sought to change the terms of approval, so decisions were being made in the absence of key background information.

The panel was used appropriately in one case for their views on a case being assessed. In

addition, challenges in a number of cases were made particularly by independent members who made sound child & carer focused contributions.

The panel chair was a middle manager responsible for family placements. He was also the manager who authorised matching decisions outside of the panel. The panel would benefit from a chair with a greater degree of independence from day to day decision making. This may enable them to challenge practice and require information in a more rigorous way. The chair did intend to review panel membership, and commented that most members had been reluctant to move on after the required 3 year term of office in the past. The intention was to introduce an independent member who had been/or whose child had been placed with foster carers as this review freed up a vacant spot.

[See requirement nos. 1, 2, 3, 10 & 11, + recommendation nos. 9 & 26.]

Short-Term Breaks

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- When foster care is provided as a short-term break for a child, the arrangement recognises that the parents remain the main carers for the child.

Standard 31 (31.1 - 31.2)

Where a fostering service provides short-term breaks for children in foster care, they have policies and procedures, implemented in practice, to meet the particular needs of children receiving short-term breaks.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
Not inspected.	0

Family and Friends as Carers

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- **Local authority fostering services' policies and procedures for assessing, approving, supporting and training foster carers recognise the particular contribution that can be made by and the particular needs of family and friends as carers.**

Standard 32 (32.1 - 32.4)

These standards are all relevant to carers who are family and friends of the child, but there is recognition of the particular relationship and position of family and friend carers.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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Managers reported that none of the 44 kinship carers looking after children had been approved as carers.

New policy and procedures had been developed and available from July 2003, but these had been only partially implemented. The social workers interviewed during this inspection were not familiar with them. The procedures required strengthening in respect of the approvals process and required timescales, which were very vague. It is recommended that the authority adopt a more systematic, holistic and equal approach to kinship care, ensuring early assessments (within 18 weeks), panel approvals (within 24 weeks), ongoing support to carers and promotion of the service provided, to back up their financial strategy. (See also standard 30).

The inspector met one kinship family who were struggling financially and also needed practical help and support, with babysitting. Their needs as carers, as distinct from the needs of the children they were caring for, did not appear to have been considered.

The inspector met another family providing a high standard of care, but the level of challenging behaviour being managed was considered to be 'typical teenage behaviour'; and the carer appeared to be too anxious about being judged as personally lacking, to seek the specialist support that may have been helpful. (See also standard 8).

One designated part time worker was in post to cover kinship care. Another full time worker had been recruited but had left and was due to be replaced. Only 4 assessments of kinship carers were allocated within the team, although it was anticipated that this number would grow.

[See requirement nos.4 & 12, + recommendation nos. 27 & 28.]

PART C

LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY

(where applicable)

Lay Assessor _____ **Signature** _____
Date _____

D.1 Registered Person's or Responsible Local Authority Manager's comments/confirmation relating to the content and accuracy of the report for the above inspection.

We would welcome comments on the content of this report relating to the Inspection conducted on 8th March 2004 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

Action taken by the NCSC in response to the provider's comments:

Amendments to the report were necessary	<input type="checkbox"/> YES
Comments were received from the provider	<input type="checkbox"/> YES
Provider comments/factual amendments were incorporated into the final inspection report	<input type="checkbox"/> YES
Provider comments are available on file at the Area Office but have not been incorporated into the final inspection report. The inspector believes the report to be factually accurate	<input type="checkbox"/>

Note:

In instances where there is a major difference of view between the Inspector and the Registered Provider responsible Local Authority fostering service Manager both views will be made available on request to the Area Office.

D.2 Please provide the Commission with a written Action Plan by 17th June 2004, which indicates how statutory requirements and recommendations are to be addressed and stating a clear timescale for completion. This will be kept on file and made available on request.

Status of the Provider's Action Plan at time of publication of the final inspection report:

Action plan was required	<input type="checkbox"/> YES
Action plan was received at the point of publication	<input type="checkbox"/> YES
Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion	<input type="checkbox"/> YES
Action plan did not cover all the statutory requirements and required further discussion	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provider has declined to provide an action plan	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other: <enter details here>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Public reports

It should be noted that all NCSC inspection reports are public documents. Reports on children's homes are only obtainable on personal application to NCSC offices.

D.3 PROVIDER'S AGREEMENT

Registered Person's or responsible Local Authority Manager's statement of agreement/comments: Please complete the relevant section that applies.

D.3.1 I David Whitehead of Warrington Borough Council (Fostering Service) confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on 8 March 2004 and that I agree with the statutory requirements made and will seek to comply with these.

Print Name _____
Signature _____
Designation _____
Date _____

Or

D.3.2 I David Whitehead of Warrington Borough Council (Fostering Service) am unable to confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on 8 March 2004 for the following reasons:

Print Name _____
Signature _____
Designation _____
Date _____

Note: In instance where there is a profound difference of view between the Inspector and the Registered Provider both views will be reported. Please attach any extra pages, as applicable.